

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claims 48 without prejudice to or disclaimer of its subject matter. Please AMEND claims 4, 11, 20, 33, 43, 47, 50, 52, and 54-58 as follows.

1. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of multiplexing a code representing additional information with image information, comprising:

a shape setting step of setting code shape information on the basis of a feature of the image information;

a quantization condition determination step of determining a quantization condition of a pixel of interest in the image information on the basis of the code shape information and the additional information; and

a quantization step of quantizing the pixel of interest on the basis of the quantization condition.

2. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 1, wherein in said quantization step, quantization by pseudo-half-toning processing is executed.

3. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 2, wherein in said quantization step, quantization by error diffusion is executed.

4. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein~~ wherein the feature of the image information is a density at a flat portion.

5. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 1, wherein the code shape information represents a dot pattern.

6. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 5, wherein in said shape setting step, the code shape information is selected from a plurality of dot patterns prepared in advance.

7. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 6, wherein the plurality of dot patterns prepared in advance can appear at a flat portion of the image information as a quantization result in said quantization step.

8. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 7, wherein in said shape setting step, a dot pattern is selected, which does not appear as the quantization result in a uniform flat image based on an average pixel value around the pixel of interest.

9. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 8, wherein in said shape setting step, a dot pattern is selected in which the number of on- or off-dots in a smaller number has the number of dots larger than that of the dot pattern which appears in the uniform flat image as the quantization result.

10. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 6, further comprising a color component detection step of detecting a color component of a code attachment target in the

image information, wherein in said shape setting step, the dot pattern is selected on the basis of the color component of the image information.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10, wherein ~~[[in]]~~ said shape setting step comprises setting a size of the dot pattern on ~~is set~~ the basis of the color component.

12. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 6, further comprising an edge detection step of detecting an edge portion of the image information, wherein in said shape setting step, the dot pattern is selected on the basis of whether the edge portion is contained in pixels around the pixel of interest.

13. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 12, wherein in said shape setting step, a first dot pattern is selected when the edge portion is not included in the pixels around the pixel of interest, and a second dot pattern having a denser dot layout than the first dot pattern is selected when the edge portion is included.

14. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for multiplexing a code representing additional information with image information, comprising:
holding means for holding a plurality of code shape information;
quantization condition determination means for determining a quantization condition of a pixel of interest in the image information on the basis of the additional information

and the code shape information selected from said holding means on the basis of a feature of the image information; and

quantization means for quantizing the pixel of interest on the basis of the quantization condition.

15. (Withdrawn) A recording medium which records a program code of an image processing method of multiplexing a code representing additional information with image information, the program code comprising:

a code of the shape setting step of setting code shape information on the basis of a feature of the image information;

a code of the quantization condition determination step of determining a quantization condition of a pixel of interest in the image information on the basis of the code shape information and the additional information; and

a code of the quantization step of quantizing the pixel of interest on the basis of the quantization condition.

16. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for multiplexing additional information with image information, comprising:

first input means for inputting the image information;

second input means for inputting the additional information;

quantization means for multiplexing the additional information on the image information and executing pseudo-half-toning processing so as to express the additional

information by a set of minimum number of pixels readable by an image reading apparatus in consideration of resolution of an image output apparatus for outputting the image information as an image and resolution of the image reading apparatus for reading the image output from the image output apparatus; and

output means for outputting image data processed by pseudo-half-toning processing by said quantization means.

17. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the pseudo-half-toning processing is executed by error diffusion.

18. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the pseudo-half-toning processing is executed by dithering.

19. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the set of pixels which is generated by said quantization means to express the additional information is formed from continuous pixels having a first quantization value, the continuous pixels having the first quantization value having a size determined in consideration of the resolution of the image reading apparatus.

20. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said quantization means generates, adjacent to the set of continuous pixels having the first quantization value, a set of ~~continuous~~ continuous pixels having a second quantization value for

compensating a density expressed by the set of continuous pixels having the first quantization value so as to maintain an average density of image information in a neighboring region of pixels on which the additional information is to be multiplexed.

21. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein the additional information multiplexed on the image information is expressed by a combination of the set of continuous pixels having the first quantization value and the set of continuous pixels having the second quantization value.

22. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the additional information is attached to one of a plurality of color components of the image information.

23. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 22, further comprising selection means for checking a density of a neighboring pixel near an attachment position of the additional information in units of the plurality of color components and selecting, on the basis of an average density of the neighboring pixels, a color component hard to visually recognize from the plurality of color components as an image information of the image information, with which the additional information is to be multiplexed.

24. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 22, further comprising classification means for, when said second input means inputs a plurality of additional

information, classifying the additional information so as to multiplex the plurality of additional information with different color components of the image information.

25. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for reading an image having additional information multiplexed thereon and separating the additional information, comprising:

read means for reading the image;

detection means for detecting a position where the additional information is multiplexed in the image; and

separation means for specifying the additional information multiplex position of the image on the basis of a detection result from said detection means and separating the additional information from the specified position.

26. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said detection means reads a predetermined dot pattern printed in a predetermined region of the image to detect the additional information multiplex position.

27. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said detection means regards a position defined in accordance with a predetermined image format as the additional information multiplex position.

28. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said read means comprises a scanner.

29. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said separation means comprises measurement means for measuring an average density value near the specified additional information multiplex position and a difference between a maximum value and a minimum value of a local average pixel value, and extracts a value of a code representing the additional information on the basis of the average density value and difference measured by said measurement means.

30. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 29, wherein said separation means comprises selection means for selecting one of a plurality of threshold values on the basis of the average density value, and extracts the value of the code by comparing the threshold value selected by said selection means with the difference.

31. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of multiplexing additional information with image information and separating the additional information from an image having the additional information multiplexed, comprising:

a first input step of inputting the image information;

a second input step of inputting the additional information;

a quantization step of multiplexing the additional information with the image information and executing pseudo-half-toning processing so as to express the additional

information by a set of minimum number of pixels readable by an image reading apparatus in consideration of resolution of an image output apparatus for outputting the image information as an image and resolution of the image reading apparatus for reading the image output from the image output apparatus;

an output step of forming an image on the basis of image data processed by pseudo-halftoning processing and outputting the image;

a read step of reading the image;

a detection step of detecting a position where the additional information is multiplexed in the image; and

a separation step of specifying the additional information multiplex position of the image on the basis of a detection result in said detection step and separating the additional information from the specified position.

32. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, wherein the set of pixels which is generated in said quantization step to express the additional information is formed from continuous pixels having a first quantization value, the continuous pixels having the first quantization value having a size determined in consideration of the resolution of the image reading method.

33. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, wherein said the quantization step generates, adjacent to the set of continuous pixels having the first quantization value, a set of continuous pixels having a second quantization value for

compensating a density expressed by the set of continuous pixels having the first quantization value so as to maintain an average density of image information in a neighboring region of pixels on which the additional information is to be multiplexed.

34. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 33, wherein the additional information multiplexed on the image information is expressed by a combination of the set of continuous pixels having the first quantization value and the set of continuous pixels having the second quantization value.

35. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 31, wherein said separation step comprises a measurement step of measuring an average density value near the specified additional information multiplex position and a difference between a maximum value and a minimum value of a local average pixel value, and a value of a code representing the additional information is extracted on the basis of the average density value and difference measured in said measurement step.

36. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 35, wherein said separation step comprises a selection step of selecting one of a plurality of threshold values on the basis of the average density value, and the value of the code is extracted by comparing the threshold value selected in said selection step with the difference.

37. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable memory which stores a program for executing image processing of multiplexing additional information with image information or/and separating the additional information from an image having the additional information multiplexed, said program comprising:

a code for executing first input processing of inputting the image information;

a code for executing second input processing of inputting the additional information;

a code for executing processing of multiplexing the additional information with the image information and executing pseudo-halftoning processing so as to express the additional information by a set of minimum number of pixels readable by an image reading apparatus in consideration of resolution of an image output apparatus for outputting the image information as an image and resolution of the image reading apparatus for reading the image output from the image output apparatus;

a code for executing processing of forming an image on the basis of image data processed by pseudo-halftoning processing and outputting the image;

a code for executing read processing of reading the image;

a code for executing detection processing of detecting a position where the additional information is multiplexed in the image; and

a code for executing separation processing of specifying the additional information multiplex position of the image on the basis of a detection result in the detection processing and separating the additional information from the specified position.

38. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of multiplexing additional information with image information, comprising:

- a first input step of inputting the image information;
- a second input step of inputting the additional information;
- a quantization step of multiplexing the additional information with the image information and executing pseudo-halftoning processing so as to express the additional information by a set of minimum number of pixels readable by an image reading apparatus in consideration of resolution of an image output apparatus for outputting the image information as an image and resolution of the image reading apparatus for reading the image output from the image output apparatus; and

- an output step of forming an image on the basis of image data processed by pseudo-halftoning processing in said quantization step and outputting the image.

39. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable memory which stores a program for executing image processing of multiplexing additional information with image information, said program comprising:

- a code for executing first input processing of inputting the image information;
- a code for executing second input processing of inputting the additional information;

- a code for executing quantization processing of multiplexing the additional information with the image information and executing pseudo-halftoning processing so as to express the additional information by a set of minimum number of pixels readable by an image

reading apparatus in consideration of resolution of an image output apparatus for outputting the image information as an image and resolution of the image reading apparatus for reading the image output from the image output apparatus; and

a code for executing output processing of forming an image on the basis of image data processed by pseudo-half-toning processing by quantization processing and outputting the image.

40. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the additional information is expressed by a color component for which a set of pixels is generated by said quantization means.

41. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus, comprising:
input means for inputting an image;
attachment means for attaching predetermined information to the image input by said input means; and
output means for outputting the image to which the predetermined information is attached by said attachment means,

wherein said attachment means adaptively attaches the predetermined information on the basis of resolution at which the image output by said output means is read.

42. (Withdrawn) An image processing method, comprising:
an input step of inputting an image;

an attachment step of attaching predetermined information to the image input in said input step; and

an output step of outputting the image to which the predetermined information is attached in said attachment step,

wherein said attachment step adaptively attaches the predetermined information on the basis of resolution at which the image output in said output step is read.

43. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable memory which stores a program for executing image processing, said program comprising:

a code for executing input processing of inputting an image;

a code for executing attachment processing of attaching predetermined information to the image input by the input processing; and

a code for executing output processing of outputting the image to which the predetermined information is attached by the attachment processing,

wherein the attachment processing comprises adaptively attaching ~~attaches~~ the predetermined information on the basis of resolution at which the image output in the output processing is read.

44. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for attaching predetermined information to image information, comprising:

input means for inputting the image information; and

attachment means for attaching a plurality of different predetermined information to different color components of the image information input by said input means, respectively.

45. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of attaching predetermined information to image information, comprising:

an input step of inputting the image information; and

an attachment step of attaching a plurality of different predetermined information to different color components of the image information input in said input step, respectively.

46. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable memory which stores a program for executing image processing of attaching predetermined information to image information, said program comprising:

a code for executing input processing of inputting the image information; and

a code for executing attachment processing of attaching a plurality of different predetermined information to different color components of the image information input by the input processing, respectively.

47. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

discrimination means for discriminating characteristics of image information of a first region included in a region of a first dot pattern representing predetermined information;

generation means for generating a second dot pattern representing any one of a plurality of types of [second] dot patterns [corresponding to a first region smaller than a size of a first dot pattern representing predetermined information] in accordance with a discrimination result by said discrimination means; [and]

embedding means for [selectively] embedding the [plurality of types of] second dot pattern[s] in [units of] the first region[s]; and

means for repeatedly executing discriminating characteristics of image information of a next first region, generating a second dot pattern, and embedding the second dot pattern in the next first region, until the region of the first dot pattern is embedded.

48. (Cancelled)

49. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the second dot pattern is a dot pattern formed from a single line.

50. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the first dot pattern comprises ~~is formed by combining the second dot patterns~~ pattern.

51. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 47, wherein said embedding means quantizes the first region to output quantized image information containing the second dot pattern.

52. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 51, further comprising determination means for determining a quantization condition on the basis of the image information in the first region, the predetermined information, and the second dot pattern, wherein ~~wherein~~ said embedding means quantizes the first region on the basis of the determined quantization condition.

53. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 51, wherein the quantization is executed by pseudo-half-toning processing using error diffusion.

54. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim [48] 47, wherein said discrimination means discriminates a quantization error previously generated in the first region by said embedding means.

55. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim [48] 47, wherein said discrimination means discriminates a type of the second dot pattern previously embedded by said embedding means.

56. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim [48] 47, wherein said embedding means inhibits embedding the second dot pattern when it is determined on the basis of the discrimination result [from] by said discrimination means that the first region has a predetermined density.

57. (Currently Amended) An image processing method, comprising:
a discrimination step of discriminating characteristics of image information of a first region included in a region of a first dot pattern representing predetermined information;
a generation step of generating a second dot pattern representing any one of a plurality of types of [second] dot patterns [corresponding to a first region smaller than a size of a first dot pattern representing predetermined information] in accordance with a discrimination result in the discrimination step; [and]
an embedding step of [selectively] embedding the [plurality of types of] second dot pattern[s] in [units of] the first region[s.]; and
a step of repeatedly executing discriminating characteristics of image information of a next first region, generating a second dot pattern, and embedding the second dot pattern in the next first region, until the region of the first dot pattern is embedded.

58. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable memory, comprising:
a code for discriminating characteristics of image information in a first region included in a region of a first dot pattern representing predetermined information;
a code for generating a second dot pattern representing any one of a plurality of types of [second] dot patterns [corresponding to a first region smaller than a size of a first dot pattern representing predetermined information] in accordance with the discrimination; [and]
a code for [selectively] embedding the [plurality of types of] second dot pattern[s] in [units of] the first region[s.]; and

a code for repeatedly executing discriminating characteristics of image information of a next first region, generating a second dot pattern, and embedding the second dot pattern in the next first region, until the region of the first dot pattern is embedded.

59. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for multiplexing image information and additional information different from the image information, comprising:

decodability determination means for determining whether decoding is possible when a code is attached on the basis of a pixel value around a pixel of interest in the image information;

quantization condition determination means for determining quantization condition on the basis of a determination result from said decodability determination means, the pixel value around the pixel of interest in the image information, and the additional information to be multiplexed; and

quantization means for quantizing the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing under the quantization condition determined by said quantization condition determination means.

60. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said decodability determination means determines decodability in accordance with an image density around the pixel of interest.

61. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said decodability determination means determines decodability in accordance with a black component density around the pixel of interest.

62. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said decodability determination means determines decodability in accordance with edge information around the pixel of interest.

63. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest by pseudo-half-toning processing based on error diffusion.

64. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 60, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest by pseudo-half-toning processing based on error diffusion.

65. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 61, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest by pseudo-half-toning processing based on error diffusion.

66. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 62, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest by pseudo-half-toning processing based on error diffusion.

67. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of multiplexing image information and additional information different from the image information, comprising the steps of:

determining whether decoding is possible when a code is attached on the basis of a pixel value around a pixel of interest in the image information and determining quantization condition on the basis of a determination result, the pixel value around the pixel of interest in the image information, and the additional information to be multiplexed; and

quantizing the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing under the determined quantization condition.

68. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for attaching predetermined information to image information, comprising:

determination means for determining detectability of the predetermined information attached to the image information; and

attachment means for attaching the predetermined information in accordance with the detectability determined by said determination means.

69. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of attaching predetermined information to image information, comprising the steps of:

determining detectability of the predetermined information attached to the image information; and

attaching the predetermined information in accordance with the determined detectability.

70. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a program for an image processing method of attaching predetermined information to image information, said program comprising:

a code for determining detectability of the predetermined information attached to the image information; and

a code for attaching the predetermined information in accordance with the determined detectability.

71. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

input means for inputting image information;

generation means for generating an amount representing a degree of complexity of the image information; and

information attachment means for attaching predetermined information to the image information in accordance with the amount representing the degree of complexity.

72. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 71, wherein said generation means comprises a degree-of-complexity detection means for detecting the amount representing the degree of complexity of the image from the image information.

73. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 72, wherein said degree-of-complexity detection means comprises:

pseudo-halftoning processing means for executing pseudo-halftoning processing for the image information;

compression processing means for compressing the image information after the pseudo-halftoning processing; and

compression ratio calculation means for calculating a compression ratio of the image information after the compression processing.

74. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 72, wherein said degree-of-complexity detection means comprises:

frequency conversion means for executing frequency conversion for the image information; and

average high-frequency power calculation means for calculating an average square-sum of a plurality of high-frequency components of conversion coefficients after the frequency conversion.

75. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 72, wherein said degree-of-complexity detection means comprises:

frequency conversion means for executing frequency conversion for the image information; and

average high-frequency absolute sum calculation means for calculating an average absolute sum of a plurality of high-frequency components of conversion coefficients after the frequency conversion.

76. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 71, wherein said information attachment means attaches to the image information the predetermined information different from the image information from said input means by attaching a dot pattern.

77. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 76, wherein said information attachment means controls a region where the information is to be attached, in accordance with the amount representing the degree of complexity of the image information, which is generated by said generation means.

78. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 77, wherein said information attachment means controls a total amount of dot pattern to be attached to the image information by decreasing an information area interval for complex image information and by increasing the information area interval for simple image information.

79. (Withdrawn) An image processing method, comprising:
an input step of inputting image information; a generation step of generating an amount representing a degree of complexity of the image information; and
an information attachment step of attaching predetermined information to the image information in accordance with the amount representing the degree of complexity.

80. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores an program for attaching predetermined information to input image information, said program comprising:
a code for executing the input step of inputting the image information;
a code for executing the generation step of generating an amount representing a degree of complexity of the image information; and
a code for executing the information attachment step of attaching predetermined information to the image information in accordance with the amount representing the degree of complexity.

81. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for superposing additional information different from image information on the image information and outputting the image information, comprising:
input means for inputting the image information;
pseudo-half-toning processing means for quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information; and

additional information superposition means for selectively superposing a plurality of additional information each having a specific dot pattern in accordance with a density around the pixel of interest processed by said pseudo-half-toning processing means.

82. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 81, further comprising generation means for generating, for low- and high-density regions, two types of additional information each having a specific dot pattern, the dot pattern for the high-density region having a pixel interval smaller than that of the dot pattern for the low-density region.

83. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 82, wherein said generation means generates at least two types of dot patterns suitable for the respective density levels, and the pattern for the high-density region has the pixel interval smaller than that of the pattern for the low-density region and a pixel density level higher than that of the pattern for the low-density region.

84. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 81, wherein said additional information superposition means comprises density reference region determination means for determining a region for measurement of an image density, and pixel count calculation means for calculating the number of pixels present in the density reference region, and a predetermined threshold value is compared with the number of pixels obtained by said pixel count calculation means, and in accordance with a comparison result, the plurality of additional information are selectively superposed.

85. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 81, wherein said additional information superposition means comprises density reference region determination means for determining a region for measurement of an image density, and total density value calculation means for calculating a sum of density levels of pixels present in the density reference region, and

a predetermined threshold value is compared with the value obtained by said total density value calculation means, and in accordance with a comparison result, the plurality of additional information are selectively superposed.

86. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of superposing additional information different from image information on the image information and outputting the image information, comprising:

an input step of inputting the image information;

a pseudo-halftoning processing step of quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information; and

an additional information superposition step of selectively superposing a plurality of additional information each having a specific dot pattern in accordance with a density around the pixel of interest processed in said pseudo-halftoning processing step.

87. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a program code for an image processing method of superposing additional information different

from image information on the image information and outputting the image information, said program code comprising:

- a code for the input step of inputting the image information;
- a code for the pseudo-halftoning processing step of quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information; and
- a code for the generation step of generating a plurality of additional information each having a specific dot pattern; and
- a code for the additional information superposition step of selectively superposing the generated plurality of additional information in accordance with a density around the pixel of interest processed in the pseudo-halftoning processing step.

88. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for attaching predetermined information to image information, comprising:

- input means for inputting the image information; holding means for holding a plurality of dot patterns having different densities; and
- attachment means for selectively attaching the dot patterns to the image information in accordance with a density of the image information.

89. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of attaching predetermined information to image information, comprising:

- an input step of inputting the image information;

a holding step of holding a plurality of dot patterns having different densities;
and
an attachment step of selectively attaching the dot patterns to the image
information in accordance with a density of the image information.

90. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a
program code for an image processing method of attaching predetermined information to image
information, said program code comprising:

a code for the input step of inputting the image information;
a code for the holding step of holding a plurality of dot patterns having
different densities; and
a code for the attachment step of selectively attaching the dot patterns to the
image information in accordance with a density of the image information.

91. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for multiplexing image
information and additional information different from the image information, comprising:

input means for inputting the image information;
quantization means for quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information;
dot pattern holding means for holding a specific dot pattern representing
presence of the additional information in advance;
attachment position information generation means for converting the additional
information into position information as an attachment position of the dot pattern;

density detection means for grasping a density state around the attachment position of the dot pattern, which is obtained by said attachment position information generation means; and

additional information superposition means for determining, on the basis of a grasp result by said density detection means, whether the dot pattern is to be attached and superposing the additional information in accordance with a determination result.

92. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 91, wherein said density detection means comprises:

density reference region determination/holding means for determining and holding a density reference region for measurement of an image density in advance; and

pixel count calculation means for calculating the number of output processing pixels present in the density reference region held by said density reference region determination/holding means.

93. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 92, wherein said pixel count calculation means calculates the number of processing pixels present in the density reference region for all of CMYK components.

94. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 93, wherein if a value obtained by said pixel count calculation means equals a predetermined value for all the CMYK components, said additional information superposition means does not attach the dot pattern.

95. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 92, wherein said pixel count calculation means calculates the number of processing pixels present in the density reference region for some of CMYK components except a specific component.

96. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 95, wherein if a value obtained by said pixel count calculation means equals a predetermined value for some components except the specific component, said additional information superposition means does not attach the dot pattern.

97. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 94, wherein the predetermined value is "0".

98. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 96, wherein the predetermined value is "0".

99. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 91, wherein said density detection means comprises:

density reference region determination/holding means for determining and holding a density reference region for measurement of an image density in advance; and

total quantization value calculation means for calculating a sum of quantization values of processing pixels present in the density reference region held by said density reference region determination/holding means.

100. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 99, wherein said total quantization value calculation means calculates the sum of quantization values of processing pixels present in the density reference region for all of CMYK components.

101. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 100, wherein if a value obtained by said total quantization value calculation means equals a predetermined value for all the CMYK components, said additional information superposition means does not attach the dot pattern.

102. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 99, wherein said total quantization value calculation means calculates the sum of quantization values of processing pixels present in the density reference region for some of CMYK components except a specific component.

103. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 102, wherein if a value obtained by said total quantization value calculation means equals a predetermined value for some components except the specific component, said additional information superposition means does not attach the dot pattern.

104. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 101, wherein the predetermined value is "0".

105. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 103, wherein the predetermined value is "0".

106. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 91, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

107. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 92, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

108. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 93, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

109. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 94, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

110. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 95, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

111. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 96, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

112. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 97, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

113. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 98, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

114. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 99, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

115. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 100, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-halftoning processing.

116. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 101, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing.

117. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 102, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing.

118. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 103, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing.

119. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 104, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing.

120. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 105, wherein said quantization means quantizes the pixel of interest in the image information by pseudo-half-toning processing.

121. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of multiplexing image information and additional information different from the image information, comprising:

a pseudo-halftoning processing step of inputting the image information and quantizing a pixel of interest in the input image information;

a dot pattern holding step of holding a specific dot pattern representing presence of the additional information in advance;

an attachment position information generation step of converting the additional information into position information as an attachment position of the dot pattern;

a density detection step of grasping a density state around the attachment position of the dot pattern; and

an additional information superposition step of determining, on the basis of a result obtained in said density detection step, whether the dot pattern is to be attached.

122. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for attaching predetermined additional information to image information, comprising:

input means for inputting the image information; holding means for holding the additional information;

detection means for detecting a density of the image information, which is represented by a plurality of color components of the image information around an attachment position of the additional information; and

control means for, when the density of the image information, which is represented by the plurality of color components and detected by said detection means, has a predetermined value, controlling not to attach the additional information.

123. (Withdrawn) An image processing method in an image processing apparatus which has holding means for holding additional information and attaches predetermined additional information held by the holding means to image information, comprising the steps of:

detecting a density of the image information, which is represented by a plurality of color components around an attachment position of the additional information in the image information to be processed, and when the detected density of the image information, which is represented by the plurality of color components, has a predetermined value, controlling not to attach the additional information.

124. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a program for an image processing method in an image processing apparatus which has holding means for holding additional information and attaches predetermined additional information held by the holding means to image information, said program comprising:

a code for executing processing of detecting a density of the image information, which is represented by a plurality of color components around an attachment position of the additional information in the image information to be processed, and when the detected density of the image information, which is represented by the plurality of color components, has a predetermined value, controlling not to attach the additional information.

125. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus for superposing additional information different from image information on the image information and outputting the image information, comprising:

input means for inputting the image information;

pseudo-half-toning processing means for quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information;

generation means for generating additional information having a specific dot pattern; and

additional information superposition means for superposing the additional information, while maintaining a density around an attachment position of the additional information, in accordance with presence of a neighboring pixel around the attachment position of the additional information.

126. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 125, wherein said generation means calculates position information as the attachment position of the specific dot pattern.

127. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 125, wherein said additional information superposition means comprises:

first load means for loading the specific dot pattern;

second load means for loading the attachment position information generated by said generation means;

determination means for, in attaching the specific dot pattern to the image information, determining whether a pixel which is absent on the image information need be newly added; and

off-dot processing means for, when said determination means determines that a new pixel has been added, converting a neighboring pixel around the pixel into an off-dot.

128. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 125, wherein said additional information superposition means comprises:

first load means for loading the specific dot pattern;

second load means for loading the attachment position information generated by said generation means;

density increase amount calculation means for, in attaching the specific dot pattern to the image information, calculating a density amount which has increased upon attaching the specific dot pattern; and

off-dot processing means for converting, of pixels present in the region, a pixel corresponding to a value obtained by said density increase amount calculation means into an off-dot.

129. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 128, wherein said off-dot processing means comprises:

distance measurement means for measuring a distance to each pixel in the region; and

off-dot processing means for sequentially converting pixels having a density corresponding to the value obtained by said density increase amount calculation means in ascending order of distances obtained by said distance measurement means.

130. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 128, wherein said off-dot processing means comprises:

off-dot processing order determination means for determining in advance an order of deletion of pixels; and

off-dot processing means for converting pixels having a density corresponding to the value obtained by said density increase amount calculation means in accordance with the off-dot processing order determined by said off-dot processing order determination means.

131. (Withdrawn) An image processing method of superposing additional information different from image information on the image information and outputting the image information, comprising:

an input step of inputting the image information;

a pseudo-half-toning processing step of quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information;

a generation step of generating additional information having a specific dot pattern; and

an additional information superposition step of superposing the additional information while maintaining a density around an attachment position of the additional

information in accordance with presence of a neighboring pixel around the attachment position of the additional information.

132. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a program code for an image processing method of superposing additional information different from image information on the image information and outputting the image information, said program code comprising:

a code for the input step of inputting the image information;

a code for the pseudo-halftoning processing step of quantizing a pixel of interest in the image information;

a code for the generation step of generating additional information having a specific dot pattern; and

a code for the additional information superposition step of superposing the additional information while maintaining a density around an attachment position of the additional information in accordance with presence of a neighboring pixel around the attachment position of the additional information.

133. (Withdrawn) An image processing apparatus, comprising:

input means for inputting image information; holding means for holding predetermined additional information;

attachment means for attaching the predetermined additional information to the image information in units of pixels; and

adjustment means for adjusting a density of the image information around an attachment position of the additional information in accordance with a density of the additional information.

134. (Withdrawn) An image processing method, comprising:
an input step of inputting image information;
a holding step of holding predetermined additional information;
an attachment step of attaching the predetermined additional information to the image information in units of pixels; and
an adjustment step of adjusting a density of the image information around an attachment position of the additional information in accordance with a density of the additional information.

135. (Withdrawn) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a program code for an image processing method, said program code, comprising:
a code for the input step of inputting image information;
a code for the holding step of holding predetermined additional information;
a code for the attachment step of attaching the predetermined additional information to the image information in units of pixels; and
a code for the adjustment step of adjusting a density of the image information around an attachment position of the additional information in accordance with a density of the additional information.